

Message Text

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SUBJ: COMMUNIST PARTY SPONSORS AGRARIAN REFORM CONFERENCE

REF: LISBON 699

SUMMARY: COMMUNIST SPONSORED CONFERENCE ON AGRARIAN REFORM CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE EXPROPRIATION AND COMPULSORY RENTAL OF IDLE AND UNDER-UTILIZED LANDS IN SOUTHERN PORTUGAL. END SUMMARY.

1. PORTUGUESE COMMUNIST PARTY (PCP) SPONSORED "CONFERENCE OF AGRICULTURAL WORKERS OF THE SOUTH" IN CITY OF EVORA FEBRUARY 9. CONFERENCE ATTENDED BY SEVERAL THOUSAND FARM WORKERS AND INCLUDED PARTICIPATION OF REPRESENTATIVES OF MINISTRIES OF LABOR AND AGRICULTURE AND FROM THE AGRICULTURAL REORGANIZATION INSTITUTE (IRA).

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2. THEME OF CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTED IN OPENING SPEECH

BY PCP SECRETARY GENERAL ALVARO CUNHAL, WAS THAT IDLE OR POORLY FARMED LANDS SHOULD BE QUICKLY TURNED OVER TO UNEMPLOYED RURAL WORKERS. CUNHAL ALSO EMPHASIZED PCPS LONG IDENTIFICATION WITH PLIGHT OF SOUTHERN AGRICULTURAL WORKERS.

3. PARTICIPANTS DIVIDED INTO FOUR WORKING GROUPS: (A) RURAL UNEMPLOYMENT, (B) UNIONS FOR AGRICULTURAL WORKERS. (C) WELFARE AND ASSISTANCE, AND (D) AGRARIAN REFORM. EACH WORKING GROUP APPROVED LENGTHY SERIES OF RESOLUTIONS INCLUDING CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE EXPROPRIATION OF LARGE PROPERTIES WHOSE OWNERS GUILTY OF "ECONOMIC SABOTAGE" AND OF ESTATES BENEFITTED BY PUBLIC IRRIGATION PROJECTS. ALSO CALLED FOR WERE COMPULSORY RENTAL OF UNDER-UTILIZED LANDS TO RURAL WORKERS, AND NEW LAWS ON LAND TENURE AND PUNISHMENT OF ALLEGED ECONOMIC SABOTEURS. RESOLUTIONS APPROVED BY CONFERENCE MADE NO MENTION OF ANY FORM OF REIMBURSEMENT FOR EXPROPRIATED LANDS. STATEMENT ALSO EXEMPTED SMALL AND MEDIUM FARMS OF NORTHERN PORTUGAL FROM PURVIEW OF CONFERENCE. ALL LISBON NEWSPAPERS GIVING EXTENSIVE COVERAGE TO CONFERENCE, O SECULO DEVOTING NEARLY FULL PAGE TO VERBATIM TEXT OF RESOLUTIONS.

4. COMMENT: WE SEE CONFERENCE AS PCP EFFORT TO KEEP PRESSURE ON GOP TO INSTITUTE SOME AGRARIAN REFORM MEASURES PRIOR TO APRIL CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ELECTION. IF MEASURES NOT FORTHCOMING, PCP EXPECTS TO GET GOOD CAMPAIGN ISSUE. GOP POLICY STATEMENT ON AGRARIAN REFORM REFERRED TO IN REFTEL STILL NOT PUBLISHED.
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